

Thursday

31 July



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## **Dawn Summary 31 July 2025**

### **Summary of "Betrayed citizens"**

The editorial highlights the deep-rooted injustices faced by sanitation workers in Pakistan, exposing a troubling picture of caste- and faith-based discrimination. Despite playing a crucial role in maintaining urban hygiene, sanitation workers—mostly from minority communities—continue to suffer degrading treatment, hazardous working conditions, and systemic exclusion. A recent report by Amnesty International, in collaboration with the Centre for Law & Justice, underscores how these individuals are denied basic rights: they are often hired through discriminatory advertisements requiring non-Muslim applicants, lack formal job contracts, are paid less than minimum wage, and are forced to clean sewers without protective gear. Social marginalisation adds to their suffering, with many workers subjected to verbal abuse, segregation, and even blasphemy allegations, such as those that triggered the 2023 Jaranwala violence. The piece stresses the urgent need for structural reforms, calling on the state to outlaw caste discrimination, ensure fair hiring practices, enforce labour protections, and replace manual sewer cleaning with machinery. Until sanitation workers are treated with dignity and respect, Pakistan will continue to be complicit in the ongoing exploitation and silent violence against this essential, yet oppressed, segment of its population.

### **Summary of "Arbaeen travel ban"**

The government's recent decision to ban land travel to Iraq via Iran for the religious pilgrimage of Arbaeen has sparked widespread criticism for being both abrupt and seemingly unjustified, especially as it was announced just two weeks before the event. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi cited "public safety and national security" as the reasons behind the move but did not provide specific details. Interestingly, neither Iran nor Iraq appears to have objections to the overland travel of Pakistani pilgrims, and the Iranian embassy had even confirmed logistical support for the pilgrimage. Furthermore, no prior indication of a ban was given during a recent trilateral meeting of interior ministers in Tehran. The ban has left many pilgrims stranded in Quetta and caused significant financial losses to tour operators who had already arranged visas, transport, and lodging. Critics argue that while Balochistan does face serious security challenges, it is the state's duty to ensure safe passage rather than impose blanket bans. Additionally, concerns about illegal immigration through this route could be mitigated by holding tour operators accountable for pilgrims' return. The suggestion that all pilgrims should travel by air is seen as impractical due to the high costs involved. Given these factors, the article strongly urges the

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government to lift the land travel ban and fulfill its responsibility to facilitate religious freedoms and safe travel for its citizens.

### **Summary of “Sugar Politics”**

The article highlights the alarming findings of the Auditor General of Pakistan (AGP), revealing that sugar mill owners have made an additional Rs300 billion in profits by sharply increasing retail prices after being allowed to export sugar. This act, seen as a result of the industry's deep political influence, reflects a broader governance failure where the state fails to regulate markets and protect consumers. The AGP's testimony before the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) suggests that powerful business lobbies, often overlapping with the political elite, manipulate policy for their own gain. A major concern is the lack of transparency in the ownership of sugar mills, many of which are indirectly controlled by top government officials or their associates, sometimes through proxies. The PAC suspects that the export-import cycle of sugar — exporting at low prices and later importing at higher rates — is a deliberate tactic to benefit a small group of politically connected families. The committee has rightly demanded full disclosure of the real owners of these mills. While this call for transparency is commendable, past efforts — such as the 2020 inquiry during Imran Khan's tenure and actions by the Competition Commission — have failed to curb the sugar industry's manipulative practices due to its entrenched political ties. Consequently, the prospects for real reform remain dim, as the industry's influence over policymaking appears too deeply rooted to challenge effectively.

### **Summary of “A Hybrid Wasteland” by Khurram Husain**

The article paints a grim picture of Pakistan's current political and democratic landscape under a so-called hybrid regime — a system dominated by bureaucrats and the establishment, with political parties reduced to ceremonial roles. In such an environment, no meaningful reform is possible, as the parties, despite being the traditional vessels of public aspiration, are now more disorganized than ever. The ruling PML-N, with its long history of comebacks, is struggling because its past economic model, based on debt-fueled development and populist spending, is no longer viable. This leaves them clinging to power in Punjab, which is only sustainable as long as their chief rival, Imran Khan, remains imprisoned. The PPP, once the symbol of democratic resistance and transition from dictatorship, has lost its ideological ground and now appears more interested in retaining a share of power within the hybrid structure than in championing democracy. Ironically, the PTI, once complicit in creating the hybrid setup, has now become the loudest voice of public sentiment — albeit fractured from within, with its leadership divided, its supporters confused, and its founder imprisoned. Despite strong public backing, the PTI lacks a

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coherent strategy or ideology beyond populism. The author argues that unlike past eras — marked by movements like the 1973 Constitution, the 1988 election demands, or the 2008 Charter of Democracy — today there is no unifying vision or political initiative to revive democratic rule. As a result, Pakistan remains trapped in a “hybrid wasteland” with no clear path forward, as establishment-backed governance continues to overshadow civilian political will.

### **Summary of “Götterdämmerung” by F.S. Aijazuddin**

The article presents a grim and thought-provoking reflection on global militarization and the looming threat of widespread conflict, particularly under the influence of former U.S. President Donald Trump. The author argues that World War III effectively began after World War II ended in 1945, with continuous conflicts in regions like Vietnam, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Gaza, and Ukraine. He criticizes Trump for escalating militaristic rhetoric and pushing allies, especially in Europe and Japan, to significantly boost their defense spending — not for global security, but to serve America’s military-industrial complex. The article notes that Trump’s proposal for each NATO country to spend 5% of GDP on defense would massively benefit U.S. arms manufacturers, who already dominate European markets and reap billions in profits. The historical warning of President Eisenhower about the dangers of a powerful military-industrial complex is echoed, with modern evidence showing how billions from U.S. defense budgets funnel into private corporations. The author contrasts Trump’s aggressive posturing with past leaders like Nixon, who saw China not as a threat but a partner in peace. However, the landscape has changed: China is now positioning itself as the next global superpower, yet spends far less on military expansion than the U.S. Aijazuddin warns that future wars will be fought in the skies and space, and unless current trends are checked, we may be heading toward a catastrophic showdown — a modern-day **Götterdämmerung**, or “twilight of the gods,” symbolizing total collapse.

### **Summary of “Trapped in the Past” by Hassan A. Shah**

The article critiques the outdated governance model of public universities in Pakistan, particularly in Punjab, and calls for urgent structural reform to align higher education with 21st-century needs. The author, drawing from over 40 years of experience in the Punjab education system, argues that these universities still operate under colonial-era systems designed to produce obedient clerks rather than independent thinkers. Despite reforms like the creation of the Higher Education Commission (HEC), the legal and administrative frameworks remain rigid and overly politicized. Key decisions in universities require approval from multiple layers of government, including the governor, chief minister, and various bureaucratic offices, leading to chronic delays and administrative paralysis.

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Unlike universities worldwide that are adapting to new technologies and forming industry partnerships, Pakistan's institutions are stifled by red tape. Vice Chancellors lack the autonomy to hire faculty or update academic programs, while key posts often remain unfilled due to political or bureaucratic interference. There is little accountability or performance-based planning, and the system still rewards conformity over creativity. Although a few research centers in AI, biotechnology, and quantum computing show promise, they are exceptions in an otherwise stagnant system.

Shah recommends comprehensive reforms: shifting decision-making power to academic bodies like syndicates and senates, appointing university leaders through transparent, merit-based processes led by scholars, and replacing political oversight with independent boards of trustees drawn from diverse sectors. Financial autonomy is also essential, with universities needing the freedom to raise and manage funds, linked to performance metrics like research output and graduate employability. Administrative functions should be digitized for efficiency and transparency. The author concludes that unless these changes are made, Pakistan's universities will continue to decline, jeopardizing the nation's ability to train future thinkers and leaders. The transformation of higher education, he stresses, is not just an academic concern but a national necessity.

### Summary of "Pakistan's Changing Climate" by Ali Tauqeer Sheikh

The article provides a sobering analysis of how climate change is radically altering Pakistan's monsoon patterns and flood dynamics. The traditional, predictable monsoon system is breaking down, with rainfall now becoming more intense but less frequent, and shifting geographically from northern to southern regions. This shift is straining outdated infrastructure and challenging conventional flood management policies. The rising temperature — increasing at 0.18°C annually in the monsoon belt — is significantly boosting the atmosphere's capacity to hold moisture, which, when released during monsoons, causes devastating downpours. A new pattern has emerged: heatwaves precede and intensify monsoon rains, creating a cycle of extreme weather that requires urgent, integrated policy reform.

The article identifies five major trends reshaping Pakistan's flood landscape:

1. **Non-riverine flooding** is increasingly common due to sudden, localized downpours that overwhelm poorly maintained drainage systems, especially in cities like Karachi and Chakwal.
2. **Cloudbursts**, intense rainfall over small areas, have become more frequent, particularly in the northern regions. These often trigger deadly flash floods and landslides, yet are sometimes mislabelled, undermining effective risk planning.

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3. **Koh-i-Sulaiman** has emerged as a dangerous flood zone, where intense rainfall causes torrents that devastate valleys in southern Punjab, offering both risk and opportunity for water management solutions.
4. **The Salt Range and barani areas** are witnessing climate volatility, including extreme rainfall, hailstorms, and erosion due to broken private dams and heatwave impacts.
5. **Urban flooding** has worsened due to unchecked development, ineffective drainage systems, and the urban heat island effect, turning major cities into flood zones during heavy rains.

The article warns that heatwaves are not just a precursor but a trigger for floods, as hardened soil fails to absorb water, and saturated land exacerbates repeated rainfall. Pakistan now faces a “double jeopardy” — non-riverine floods from local storms and traditional riverine floods fed by upstream weather events in India. The author calls for a complete overhaul of flood management systems, integrating climate data, empowering local disaster authorities, deploying rapid-response units, and investing in nature-based and infrastructure solutions. In conclusion, climate-smart planning is no longer optional but a national imperative for survival.

